DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 253 855 CS 007 932

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TITLE Elasticizing Language - Techniques in Vocabulary Development.
PUB DATE Dec 84
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Regional Conference of the International Reading Association (5th, Baltimore, MD, December 13-15, 1984).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Influences; *Language Acquisition; *Learning Activities; *Reading Instruction; Reading Skills; Teaching Methods; Testing; *Vocabulary Development

ABSTRACT

Noting that a rich vocabulary comes from experiences and from the organizing and reorganizing of these experiences, this paper suggests ways that students may be helped to improve their vocabulary at an accelerated pace. The paper first argues that vocabulary development must be a planned program beginning in the early grades and explores some of the factors that influence vocabulary development, such as age, sex, and socioeconomic and geographical factors. It next lists some basic word development technique categories, including testing, context clues, word origins, and pronunciation and spelling. The paper then provides a rationale for testing as a vocabulary teaching technique and explores four main ways to test vocabulary development. A general list of vocabulary testing methods is appended. (HTH)

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ELASTICIZING LANGUAGE - TECHNIQUES IN VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

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ELASTICIZING LANGUAGE - TECHNIQUES IN VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

The aim of this session is a simple one - to suggest ways that students may be helped to improve their vocabulary at an *accelerated pace*. The term *accelerated pace* is used because everyone increases his vocabulary daily. He reads a new place-name in the news, hears about a new disease, correct his pronunciation of a word or learns to use it more precisely, or learns the name of a new food. Developing a rich vocabulary is not chiefly a matter of looking up words in the dictionary. On the contrary, a rich vocabulary comes from experiences and from the organizing and reorganizing of these experiences.

An effective reading program usually requires teachers who are not only actively interested in but who are excited about vocabulary development. If the teacher is excited about vocabulary development, both he and the students rate the study materials more favorably. Teacher enthusiasm, moreover, tends to compensate for any weaknesses in the materials.

Vocabulary development is conceptual development, a basic educational aim of any school or college. Each subject has key concepts; most fields of study have extensive specialized vocabularies. The specialized vocabularies have created a need for dictionaries for many fields of study. There are dictionaries for rhyming words, for business terms, for industrial arts terms, for reading terms and for most any field of endeavor you could mention. Many of these specialized vocabularies are stated as single words. In mathematics some of the key terms are: *add, divide, multiply, subtract, fraction, decimal,* and *set.* In economics, some of the key terms are: *supply, demand, gross national product.* A study of psychology talks about *reinforcement;* a study of sociology uses such terms as *diffusion* and *ecology;* reading teachers talk about *digraphs, diphthongs, blends,* and *clusters.*

I am suggesting that if we are to *elasticize language*, vocabulary development in school must be a planned program. The research in the field strongly indicates that this is a sound principle. Incidental teaching alone tends to become accidental teaching.

Beginning in the early grades, the teacher can and should introduce the student to vocabulary study habits that should increase transfer potential. For example, children can begin early to develop a mental filing system, a variety of ways to classify. They can learn to group words under general topics, first by a gross filing system, later through a finer system of discrimination.

A systematic program of vocabulary development will be influenced by age, by sex, by income, by native ability, and by social status. A tenth-grade girl does not talk about her *dolly*. A fourth-grader is not aware of what a second semester is. A disadvantaged child may not know about about *soup du jour* or *a la carte*. Boys are unfamiliar with the colors vermilion, beige, flamingo pink, champagne or hunter green.

Geographical factors affect vocabulary development. There are *farm* words as well as *city* words, *southern* words and *northern* words. Since most of us at this conference are from the northeastern region of the United States, try these words: *hoagie, submarine, hero, grinder; pizza, tomato pie; rotary, traffic circle; soda, pop; milk shake, frappe.* Minority groups have special, vivid vocabularies. Vocabulary changes through the years remind us of changes that do develop. Any systematic program of vocabulary development must consider these factors.

Allow me to try this lyric on you, the audience:

LYRICS FOR THOSE OVER THIRTY

LYRICS FOR THOSE OVER THIRTY

REMEMBER WHEN HIPPIE MEANT BIG IN THE HIPS
AND A TRIP INVOLVED TRAVEL IN CARS, PLANES, AND SHIPS?
WHEN POT WAS A VESSEL FOR COOKING THINGS IN
AND HOOKED IS WHAT GRANDMOTHER'S RUGS MIGHT HAVE BEEN?
WHEN FIX WAS A VERB MEANING MEND OR REPAIR
AND BE-IN MEANT SIMPLY EXISTING SOMEWHERE?
WHEN NEAT MEANT WELL-ORGANIZED, TIDY, AND CLEAN
AND GRASS WAS A GROUND COVER, USUALLY GREEN?
WHEN LIGHTS AND NOT PEOPLE WERE TURNED ON AND OFF
AND THE PILL WAS INTENDED TO HELP CURE A COUGH?
WHEN GROOVY MEANT FURROWED, WITH CHANNELS AND HOLLOWS
AND BIRDS WERE WINGED CREATURES LIKE ROBINS AND SWALLOWS?
WHEN A ROLL WAS A BUN AND A ROCK WAS A STONE
AND HUNG-UP WAS SOMETHING YOU DID TO THE PHONE?
WHEN CHICKEN MEANT POULTRY AND BAG WAS A SACK
AND JUNK WAS JUST CAST-OFFS AND OLD BRIC-A-BRAC?
WHEN CAT WAS A FELINE, A KITTEN GROWN UP
AND TEA WAS A LIQUID YOU DRANK FROM A CUP?
WHEN SWINGER WAS SOMEONE WHO SWUNG IN A SWING
AND PAD WAS A SORT OF A CUSHIONY THING?
WHEN WAY-OUT MEANT DISTANT AND FAR, FAR AWAY
AND MAN COULDN'T SUE YOU FOR CALLING HIM GAY?
WORDS ONCE SO SENSIBLE, SOBER, AND SERIOUS
ARE MAKING THE SCENE, MAN, LIKE PSYCHODELERIOUS.
IT'S GROOVY, DAD, GROOVY - BUT ENGLISH IT'S NOT.
ME THINKS THAT THE LANGUAGE IS GOING TO POT.

Anonymous

It is helpful to know how a child learns his first three or four thousand words. Research over the years suggests that three-fourths of the children in their first year of school have a vocabulary of between fifteen hundred and twenty-five hundred words by January and February of their first year of school. Most of these words (1) are necessary to speak almost any sentence, (2) can be sensed, (3) are ones which have been experienced, internalized and will never be forgotten, and (4) are in the everyday vocabulary of most people.

How did the children learn them? They said things; they touched things; they ate things; they drank things; they smelled things. They heard them from their parents, older children and playmates. They heard them on television and radio, on the playground and at the store. They experienced them. Their vocabulary was circumscribed only by their experiences and by the available models. Their vocabulary is reflected by their variety of experiences.

Basic word development technique categories include: testing as teaching, context clues, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, word origins, prefixed, suffixed, roots, pronunciation and spelling, semantics, figures of speech, literature and vocabulary development, using the dictionary, and word games.

I suggest several sources for techniques using these categories. My favorites are Edgar Dale's *Techniques of Teaching Vocabulary*, Edward Fry's *The Reading Teacher's Book of Lists*, and Dorothy Piercey's *Reading Activities in Content Areas*.

Testing is a highly useful vocabulary technique because (1) the student must pay close attention to complete the exercises correctly, (2) the student is actively involved, (3) the answers to the questions are clear-cut, (4) the exercises are generally brief, (5) the student senses the importance of the exercises, and (6) the teacher has a quick measurement of the student's progress.

Basically, there are four main ways to test vocabulary: (1) through identification - the student responds orally or in writing by identifying a

word according to its definition or use (for example, a word may be identified as a synonym of another word), (2) through matching - the tested words are presented in one column and the matching definitions are presented out of order in another column, (3) through multiple-choice - the student selects the correct meaning of the tested word from three or four definitions, or (4) through checking - the student checks the words he knows or doesn't know. Within these four categories the teacher uses a variety of techniques to test and teach vocabulary.

For the remainder of this session, example of some testing techniques under the category of testing as teaching will be presented. All of the techniques and examples demonstrated are from Edgar Dale's book previously mentioned but many more examples can be found from the Fry and Piercey books.

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FRY, Edward; Jacqueline K. Polk and Dona Fountoukidis. *The Reading Teacher's Book of Lists*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984.

PIERCEY, Dorothy. *Reading Activities in Content Areas*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1984.

GENERAL LIST OF VOCABULARY TESTING METHODS

1. Use matching test (with definitions) on words, roots, prefixes, and suffixes

2. Have students write out the definition(s) of a word. (Use sparingly; it is easy to overdo this approach.)

3. Present words for division into prefixes, roots, suffixes.

4. Have students define roots, prefixes, suffixes in given words.

5. Have students do a reverse crossword puzzle. ACROSS and DOWN blanks are filled in; students must then do definitions that will fit answers (Piercey)

6. Have students write as many words as possible from a given root, (e.g., aud (hear): audience, auditorium, audit, audition, etc.) before consulting a dictionary. Then, have them use the dictionary to add to the list those words known but not recalled the first time. (Avoid long. meaningless lists).

7. Have students derive the meaning of words from external context clues. Infer the meaning of the italicized word from its relationship to other words in the sentence:

   They had lemons, oranges, pomegranates, and other kinds of fruit.

8. Present a scrambled list of words to be arranged alphabetically. (This provides practice in the use of the dictionary)

9. Present a paragraph with some words underlined. Ask students to infer the meaning of these words. Discuss the use of internal and external context clues.

10. Have students write

    a. synonyms for words: *own* *possess*
    b. antonyms for words: *problem* *solution*

11. Before and after they study a chapter of one of their texts, check students' understanding of key words by multiple-choice tests. Students may be asked to help prepare these tests.

12. Test the meaning of words in famous quotations:

    a. *pledge, allegiance, republic, indivisible*
    b. *fourscore, conceived, proposition*
    c. *events, dissolve, assume, self-evident*
    d. *preamble, insure, domestic, tranquility*

    This may be done by multiple-choice or matching tests.

13. Have the students cross out the word that doesn't belong (classification tests)

a. *centurion*	*senate*	*Caesar*	*Mikado*
b. *agora*	*Shinto*	*acropolis*	*amphitheater*
c. *cuneiform*	*sphinx*	*Cicero*	*pharoah*

14. Have students substitute the correct word for these italicized "boners".

Answers

eligible	1. He's not *legible* for the army.
delusions	2. The speaker was suffering from *allusions* of grandeur.
punctured	3. My tire is *punctuated*.
rheumatic	4. My sister had *romantic* fever.
undulant	5. He was suffering from *indolent* fever.
sect	6. The crusaders belong to a religious *sex*.
rickshaw	7. In China, he rode in a *kickshaw*.

Other words frequently confuse: *angle, angel; cavalry, Calvary; persecute, prosecute; respectively, respectfully; precede, proceed; arraign, arrange.*

15. Test inflectional variations in words to see if the student sees the relationship between words of the same root. A list of composite words is presented in one column and the student is asked to provide a simple word from which each is derived. (If the teacher wishes, students may check themselves by using an answer key like the one on the left).

Answers

palace	1. palatial _____ (student supplies word)
sign	2. signify _____
person	3. personification _____
whole	4. wholly _____
weary	5. wearisome _____
waste	6. wasteful _____

Selected words will depend on students' level of attainment. Other words that might be included: (Dale, Fry)

authenticity, authentic
collegiate, college
denunciation, denounce
humanitarian, human, or humanity
competitive, compete
erroneous, error

16. Present a grid, like the one below, containing key prefixes and roots in vertical and horizontal format. The student is to combine them to form words (marked "X" in the grid). he idea is to discover the transferability of key word parts.

	a duc(t) (lead)	b tract (draw)	c dic(t) (say)	d cycle (wheel)	e pel (push)	f pod(e) (foot)
1.mono				X		X
2.bi				X		X
3.tri				X		X
4.ab(s)	X	X				
5.pro	X	X			X	
6.uni				X		X
7.ex		X			X	
8.contra			X			

Answers

1d monocycle	3d tricycle	5a product	6f unipod
1f monopode	3f tripod	5b protract	7b extract
2d bicycle	4a abduct	5e propel	7e expel
3f bipod	4b abstract	6d unicycle	8c contradict

17. Present a list of key roots that the student can combine to form words:

Word Parts		Words	
1. alti	8. mega	altimeter	1 + 9
2. anemo	9. meter	anemometer	2 + 9
3. arch(y)	10. micro	monarchy	12 + 3
4. aud	11. mit	phonograph	14 + 7
5. auto	12. mon(o)	autograph	5 + 7
6. demo	13. crat	democrat	6 + 13
7. graph(y)	14. phon(o)	demography	6 + 7